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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 22, 2007

In Today's Papers

Erdogan: 'Those Who Reject Gul's Presidency Should Leave the Country'
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Vatan, Radikal, and Cumhuriyet report a heated debate, being played out in the press, between Prime Minister Erdogan and mainstream Hurriyet columnist Bekir Coskun. In what most believe is a direct reference to what Coskun said in a column last week --"Abdullah Gul won't be my president" -- Erdogan said during a television interview late Monday that those who reject Gul as president should "leave Turkey and go live elsewhere." Bekir Coskun responded to Erdogan in today's Hurriyet by saying, "I have nowhere else to go. I cannot love another country." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet Coskun said he started to receive death threats after the remarks of Erdogan.

Papers report opposition CHP deputy chairman Mustafa Ozyurek as urging Erdogan to apologize, saying such calls could be made only in fascist countries. MHP followed suit, saying the PM's remarks had been "unfortunate." NGOs have also condemned the "unfortunate" statement of Erdogan. On page one liberal Radikal compares the words of Erdogan to earlier statements of Turkish politicians urging communists to go to Moscow or Turkish women wearing headscarves to go to Saudi Arabia. A commentary in mainstream Vatan says Erdogan's words, a clear confirmation that the PM has "not absorbed democracy," have contradicted the pledges made by Abdullah Gul that he will be a president who represents the whole nation.

Iran Warns of Shelling in Kurdish Villages

Yeni Safak and Cumhuriyet report northern Iraqi Kurdish officials said Iran has been spreading leaflets warning of ground operations supported from the air against the villages around Mount Kandil, urging residents to evacuate homes within 48 hours. Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports from Erbil the regional Kurdish administration spokesman Cemal Abdullah complained about the Iranian shelling of the Kurdish villages in the region and the military buildup along the border. "We have no ties with the PKK and PJAK;

we also don't have the power to fight against them," Abdullah said.

Russia Takes Over the Administration of Gulen School in St. Petersburg

Hurriyet, Milliyet: Papers report that a Turkish school, claimed to be established by a foundation connected with Fethullah Gulen, an Islamic Sect leader who lives in the US, has been taken over by the Russian government with claims that it has connections to the Nurcu sect and for not following the curriculum in Russia.

Hijacker: "There was no Direct Flight to Iran"

Papers reported that the hijackers of the Atlas Air jet said that they searched the internet to find direct flights from Ercan airport to Tehran, and decided to hijack a plane because there wasn't any direct flight to Tehran. They added that they were planning to meet with their Taliban brothers and join al-Qaeda.

Editorial Commentary on Iraq, the Middle East

Sami Kohen writes in the mainstream daily Milliyet: "The statement by French Minister Kouchner gives enough clues about the changing French policy on Iraq. French diplomacy wants the UN to assume a bigger role in Iraq so that there will be no vacuum in the event of a US withdrawal. Kouchner also emphasized the importance of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the establishment of a functioning democracy in Iraq. This stance is very close to Turkey's view on Iraq. Ankara too wants Iraq territorially intact and sovereign, looks for a settlement through national consensus, and sees a role for the UN in ensuring security and stability after the US withdrawal. Kuchner's remarks also indicate that France does not promote the division of Iraq or a separate Northern Iraqi state. The French FM might be more sympathetic toward Iraqi Kurds since he used to engage in the issue during his time with Doctors without

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Borders. However there is no reason [for us] to get upset about his contacts with a series of Iraqi leaders, including the Iraqi president, ethnic and religious leaders, including Barzani. Let's not forget that even Iran, despite its uneasiness over Kurdish terrorists, is in close contact with Talabani and other leaders."

Kamuran Ozbir writes in the nationalist daily Ortadogu: "Washington has started implementing a new strategy for the Middle East which basically is about establishing a new front against Iran by arming regional countries. The question is whether Iran will feel pressure and give up in the end? I think the answer to this question is no. Unlike Iraq, the Iranian regime is supported by millions. A single bomb attack against Iran can create a colossal fire in the entire region."

TV Highlights NTV (7 A.M.)

Domestic News

- The Turkish National Security Council (MGK) held its last meeting chaired by President Sezer. During yesterday's short meeting of one and a half hours the fight against terror, the situation of the Turkmen in Iraq, and a recent visit by the Iraqi PM al-Maliki to Turkey were discussed.

- Kurdish party DTP signaled it will support Abdullah Gul in the second round of the presidential voting on August 24 if Gul issues a positive message with regard to the Kurdish issue.

- The Turkish General Staff released a statement rejecting allegations of meetings held with politicians in the presidential process in a reference to press reports that Abdullah Gul enjoyed close ties with the military, and that the military was uneasy with the CHP.

- Istanbul Bar Association said complaints over abuse of civilians by policemen increased after recent legal changes expanding the powers of the police.

International News

- Greece supplies US-made weapons to the Greek Cypriots in violation of international treaties, while Turkey has pulled back all US-made weapons from Turkish Cyprus.

- Turkish Cyprus leader Mehmet Ali Talat told The Daily Telegraph that Cyprus faces "permanent partition" unless the conflict between the Greeks and Turks is resolved soon.

- A website of the northern Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) claims the personnel working in Turkey's Mosul consulate are "spies, not diplomats".

- New video from 1994 that surfaced on YouTube shows VP Dick Cheney speaking about why dismantling Saddam Hussein's regime during the Gulf War would lead to a "quagmire."

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